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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000895

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM PINR KDEM MD

SUBJECT: FM LEANCA DESCRIBES MOLDOVAN FOREIGN
POLICY HOPES TO DAS RUSSELL

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Speaking to DAS Dan Russell on November 19, Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Iurie Leanca discussed Moldova's need for a total U-turn in Moldova's foreign policy, from firing "useless" ambassadors, to normalizing relations with Romania, Ukraine, Russia and the EU. DAS Russell assured continued USG support for Moldova's sovereignty, advised on "achieving the achievable" with Ukraine and Russia, and supported the idea that a declaration at the OSCE ministerial would be useful only if it produced tangible results. End summary.

"We Are European, but You Help the Most"

¶12. (C) Leanca began by noting that Moldova under the Communists was an authoritarian regime with "no police, but a Soviet militia." He complained that the EU reaction to crackdowns after April 7 post-election riots failed to focus on democratic shortcomings of the Communist government, and thanked the USG for its more pro-active approach on political dialogue, security, trade, and investment--especially the Millennium Challenge Compact. "We are a European country," Leanca said, "but the real assistance comes from the United States." He added his hope that an official visit by PM Vlad Filat could be arranged for January.

The Easy Winner--Romania

¶13. (C) Noting that Moldovan foreign policy, like its domestic policy, needed a "complete reset," Leanca announced that he had recalled six ambassadors appointed by the previous government, and was planning to recall six or seven more. As an example of a successful reset in Moldova's foreign policy, he cited his recent visit to Bucharest, where he was impressed by the pragmatism of the Romanians and the benefit that Moldova would receive from Romania's EU and NATO expertise. He also noted with a smile that there was no difference between rival presidential candidates Traian Basescu and Mircea Geoana in terms of the aid and assistance that both want to give to Moldova.

A Tougher Item--Ukraine

¶14. (C) Leanca, noting that the previous Communist-

led government had had no dialogue with Ukraine, complained that the Ukrainians were acting emotionally and expecting too much from the change of government, particularly on border demarcation: "They want to settle everything now, and ignore our issues," he said. Leanca hoped for more progress once he had chosen a deputy minister to handle the Ukrainian portfolio, but warned that continuing electoral uncertainty in Ukraine will make progress difficult.

¶5. (C) Leanca asked DAS Russell to encourage the Ukrainians to discuss technical realities, and keep sensitive issues out of the newspapers. The FM said that he had heard from Timoshenko about diversifying gas supplies via the "wide stream," but had heard nothing in the last month: "Perhaps she has been using her imagination too much, and has nothing to do with reality," he said. Leanca also noted that the international community had underrated the Ukrainians' ability to influence a Transnistrian settlement.

Russia--Complain without Antagonizing

¶6. (C) Leanca said that he appreciated DAS Russell's read-out on U.S.-Russian relations and agreed that decades of mistrust and missed opportunities would be difficult to overcome. Leanca noted that he did not want to antagonize Russia, but still needed to address continued

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economic sanctions and Russian troop presence in Transnistria. The troops, he stated, take the element of partnership out of the phrase "security partnership." Leanca complained that Russia wanted to make the Moldovan presidential election an "international exercise with only eastern participation." He said that failure to elect a president would not be the end of the world, and that Moldova would still have a government committed to being a model for EU partnership.

International Issues--GUAM and the OSCE Ministerial

¶7. (C) Leanca stated that Moldova, which almost left GUAM under the previous government, would now return gradually, on the basis of real benefits to Moldova. Concerning the upcoming OSCE ministerial in Athens, he agreed with DAS Russell that a ministerial declaration would be useful only if it achieves something, and that a good start would be the Helsinki draft, to which all parties have agreed, save for the final two paragraphs. Leanca stated that Russia was firmly against any language on NATO, and that Moldova did not want any language on Moldovan neutrality without action on Russian troops. Leanca also said that now was the time to move ahead on the Peacekeeping Force: "There has been no bloodshed since 1992. Why not have a civilian and international force?"

¶8. (C) DAS Russell and Leanca agreed that a useful and achievable deliverable in any ministerial declaration was a commitment to withdraw one trainload of obsolete and dangerous ammunition from Transnistrian armories. Leanca joked that once such operation a year would solve that problem in 20 years, but agreed that it was a good start.

Comment:

¶9. (C) Leanca was on top of his brief, focused and articulate. He was also greatly appreciative of USG efforts to assist Moldova in the transition to which he is committed. He showed himself to be a firm friend of the United States, and committed to our common interests in a democratic and prosperous Moldova.

CHAUDHRY